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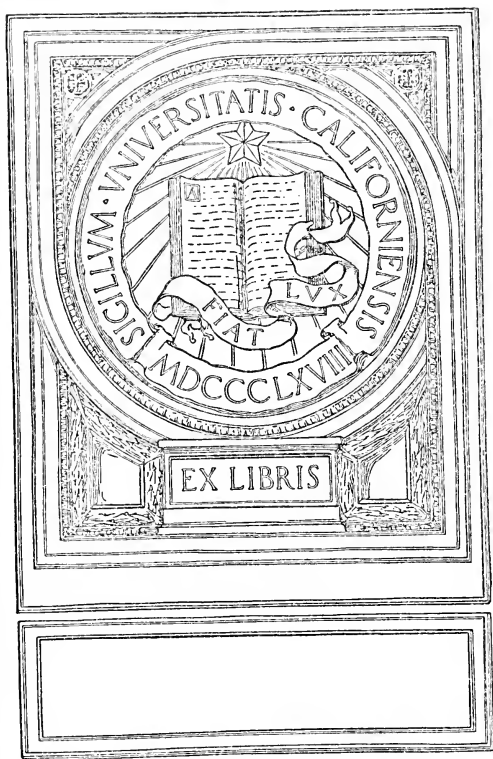
AMONG THE FLOWERS
&
OTHER POEMS



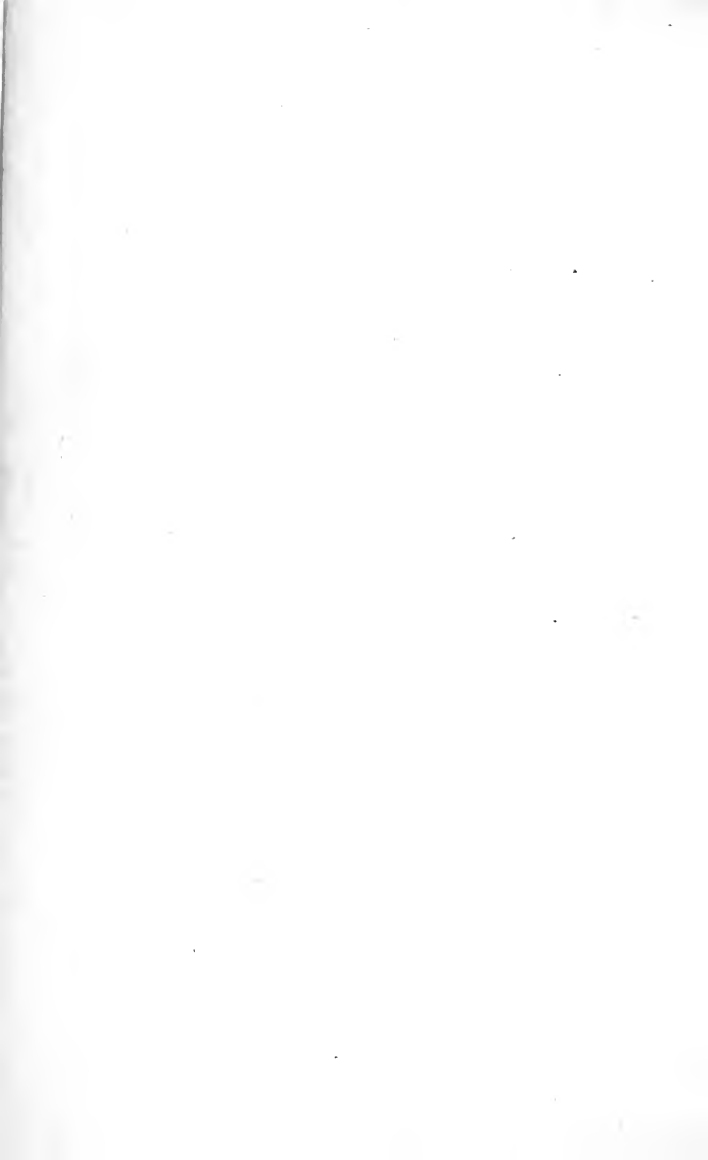
by

FRANCIS W. BOURDILLON





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AMONG THE FLOWERS,

And Other Poems.



AMONG THE FLOWERS,

And Other Poems.

BY

FRANCIS W. BOURDILLON.



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To the Name,

THAT FOR ME EMBRACES

ALL THE INFLUENCES, MEMORIES, AND AFFECTIONS

THAT FOR ALL MEN HAUNT THE NAME OF HOME,

TO

Woolbeding,

AND, THEREIN, TO ALL

THAT IMPRINTED INFLUENCE AND MEMORY,

AND INSPIRED AFFECTION,

I DEDICATE THEIR RESULT—

My Verses.

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AMONG THE FLOWERS.

AMONG THE FLOWERS.

DEDICATION.

I BRING again thy gifts to thee,
O home I held so dear !
Of all thy thousand gifts to me
The thin first-fruits are here.
For, nestling in thy woodlands warm,
Not one fair flower of Spring
Owes more to thee its life and form,
Than these pale blooms I bring.

I bring again thy gifts ; but not
As some sad lover brings
The pledges of a love forgot,
The ringlets and the rings.
The lover has lost all ; but I,
Till I shall cease to be,
Can never lose in earth and sky
What I have learnt from thee.

I bring thy gifts, but not as given,
Thy river-side along,
In woodland flowers or winds of heaven,
In ecstasies of song.
Ah! could I give one hour's delight
Of all that fled so swift,
Clear as thy stream gives back the light,
That were a worthier gift!

Yet deeper gifts, than deepening joy
In all things sweet and fair,
Grew with me, as I grew from boy
To man more reasoning there.
With love of thee was wov'n a love
More tender yet, and true;
And faith seemed simple, while above
Spread such a heaven of blue.

And though, as life unfolded more,
Experience, year by year,
Grew larger than thy simple lore,
This only grew more dear.
For as strange languages may be
In our own letters read,
Were all new truths and joys to me
By thine interpreted.

What gift have I to give again,
What poor return for all,
As roses to the earth are fain
To give their leaves that fall?

This verse, that of thy own gift grows,
For my return I cull,—
The faded fallings from a rose
Whose brightest blooms were dull.

Yet let not this, so wise an age,
Despise my woodland themes!
The flowers, that first our eyes engage,
Bring back our happiest dreams.
And earth, though with renown she rings
Of human pomp and powers,
Has been not more the world of kings,
Than world of simple flowers.



IDLE DAYS.

SING me a song of idle days,
When rosy and white are the new-blown mays,
And rosy and white on the wanton breeze
The petals fall from the apple trees,
And under the hedge, where the shade lies wet,
Are children, picking the violet!
Sing me a song of idle days,
When Spring is queen over woods and ways!

Sing me a song of idle days,
When half the world in the hay-field strays,
And white against the woods behind
The grass is tossed in the idle wind,
And there by the stream, the world forgot,
Two lovers are plucking forget-me-not!
Sing me a song of idle days,
When Love in the hay-field laughs and plays!

Sing me a song of idle days,
When golden languor is on the ways,
And far away, where the upland ends,
Among red corn the reaper bends,

And farther the faint line of the sea
Lies blue, to mind us our land is free !
Sing me a song of idle days,
When Love dreams in a golden haze !

But sing no song of the winter time !
Or sing it of soft and southern clime !
For Winter is cruel, and cold, and stern,
And we sigh for the gentle Spring's return,
And the snow lies drear by the frozen stream,
Where Love no longer can stray to dream.
Sing me no song of the winter time,
For Love flies then to a softer clime !



A VALENTINE'S DAY GREETING.

NOW, while the tyrant Winter still
Keeps back the Spring, that would be forth,
With snows, his sentries, on the hill,
And winds, his warriors, in the North ;

I wonder if the world you see
Is still, as in my memory, green ;
Though yet no shoot be on the tree,
Nor primrose peep its leaves between !

Though here the heaven show nought of blue,
Nor signs of Spring in earth appear,
My fancy idly pictures you
In glories of the older year.

I dream of meadows green and lush
With lavish grasses of the Spring ;
I seem to hear the joyous thrush
Already to his nestlings sing.

Already, as I dream, you go
Across the field, along the road,
To copses, where untimely blow
The primroses, to make your load.

Already in the wooded Coombe,
Whose leaves are greener now than March,
You tear the mosses from their gloom,
And pick the pink cones from the larch.

And even to the hazel lane
I follow you, and see you find
The ferns and foxgloves tall again,
While budding briars the hazels bind.

Dreams, these are dreams,—how little worth !
Yet were we nearer Paradise,
Had every heart one place on earth
Could bring such dreams to waking eyes.



THE EAST WIND.

AN Angel I come, at the bidding of God,
But I leave no bowers of the Blest,
With flowers that follow me strewing the sod,
As the bountiful wings of the West.

Rather a sword in my hand I bring,
And a blast in my terrible breath,
To slay the warm life of the infant Spring,
With a chill from the presence of Death.

The bare trees shiver, the budded sigh
For their first-born, never to blow,
While they linger unclad, as the Spring goes by,
Till a thin late greenery grow.

The primrose face, and the violet,
Hide from my cold keen kiss ;
And the butterfly droops, and would fain lie yet
In his late-left chrysalis.

Yet kindly the forward flowers I keep,
Lest untimely their day be done ;
And the blue bright heaven my broad wings sweep
Of the clouds that grudge them the sun.

And merrily, merrily, over the sea,
The sailor to port I bring;
And cheerily, cheerily, over the lea,
In the ploughman's ears I sing.

And the earth's warm heart, that was softened with
And saddened with days of rain, [snows,
I rouse from her weeping and dreaming of woes,
And brace her to bearing again.

Yet little favour I find of men,
Or love of the flowers I love,
For I linger not to drowse in the glen,
Nor to dream in the shadowy grove.

And in vain I woo in the flowery wood;
Yet never I bow to despair;
But I break away, as a brave heart should,
From the places that scorn my care.

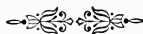
And out and away to the bare bleak downs
I rush, and the open sky,
My only lover that never frowns,
As my wild wings whistle by.

SPRING IS COMING.

BY the bursting of the leaves,
By the lengthening of the eves,
Spring is coming.

By the flowers that scent the air,
By the skies more blue and fair,
By the singing everywhere,
Spring is coming.

All the woods and fields rejoice,
Spring is coming.
Only here and there a voice,—
Here of buds the worm has worn,
Here of birds whose nest is torn,
There of those whose life is pent
Far from pleasant sight and scent;—
Wails, as if their life's distress
Won a new wild bitterness,
Spring is coming.



LOVE-FLOWERS.

OH, who was watching when Love came by,
When Love came here, in the glad Spring hours?
The scarf was torn from his laughing eye,
And he wore instead a wreath of flowers.

The wreath of flowers his head went round,
And about his eyes, as the scarf had been;
But in vain the flowery band was bound,
For he peeped the flowers and leaves between.

He wore no quiver, he bore no bow,
And innocent looked, as a blinded boy;
With flowers about him, above, below,
The Spirit he seemed of Spring and joy.

But here and there he let fall a flower,
The cruel, the bright little blinded god;
And, watching, I saw that hour by hour
These blooms took root in the green Spring sod.

And whoso plucks the flowers that grow
From the blooms Love flung from his wreaths above,
Though sweetest-seeming of blossoms they blow,
His heart shall be hot with the madness of Love.

WOOD-SORREL.

BENEATH the towering oak-tree,
The frail wood-sorrel grows ;
When not a leaf is budded,
In robe of white she blows,
And dares to the bright heaven
Her maiden heart disclose.

But when the leaves above her
O'ershad her faithful eye,
That dance as happy playmates
With her far-worshipped sky,
She has no hope nor pleasure
But all unknown to die.

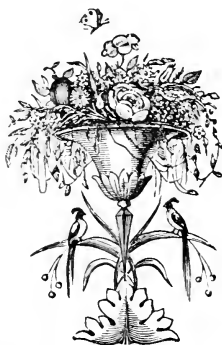
So, when I first beheld thee,
Awhile I dared adore ;
But now about thy pathway
A thousand lovers pour,
I droop, like wan wood-sorrel,
To blossom never more.



THE DIFFERENCE.

SWEETER than voices in the scented hay,
Or laughing children, gleanings ears that stray,
Or Christmas songs, that shake the snows above,
Is the first Cuckoo, when he comes with Love.

Sadder than birds on sunless summer eves,
Or drip of raindrops on the fallen leaves,
Or wail of wintry waves on frozen shore,
Is Spring that comes, but brings us Love no more!



PRIMROSES.

SWEET Primroses, I hold you dear,
That heedless are of me;
You have no ears, my words to hear,
No eyes, my gaze to see.

You love the rain, that swells each bud,
The sun, that bids you blow,
The breeze, that calms your gentle blood,
And sways you to and fro.

But I am least of all to you,
For what have I to give?
What can I add of pleasure new
To your one joy—to live?

And yet the sunshine finds no bliss
To smile, and win your smiles;
The breeze is careless of the kiss,
It takes or gives by whiles.

While I, who love, must yearn in vain,
For all I take of you,
To give to you such joy again,
As gives one drop of dew.

And you, fair flowers of joy and light,
Blessed above all remain,
To give such delicate delight,
And take no gift again.



SPRING'S FOOTSTEPS.

SPRING is coming; o'er the meadow
Lightly are her footsteps laid,
On the leaves in dewy shadow,
On the flowers in sunny glade.

East winds cease, and North winds flee her;
Gossamer of silken sheen
Weaves the robes whereby we see her,
Else she is not to be seen.

Yet who with a pure heart gazes,
Through her robes, that wind and weave,
Sees her lips in rose-tipped daisies,
Sees her eyes in stars of eve.

Men catch glimpses, few and fewer,
Through their toil and strife and din;
But the holy flowers view her,
And the birds that know not sin.

Hence the calm-eyed primrose weareth
Her sweet look of happiness,
Hence the violet perfume beareth,
Daffodils their dazzling dress.

Hence the blackbird sings sweet vespers,
And the lark loud hymns of praise,
And the very wind has whispers,
That to heaven the heart can raise.



AN APRIL SHOWER.

THE primrose head is bowed with tears,
The wood is rippling through with rain,
Though now the heaven once more appears,
And beams the bounteous sun again.
From every blade and blossom cup
The earth sends thankful incense up.

O happy hearts of flower and field,
That, soon as grief be overpast,
Your fragrant thankfulness can yield
For troubled skies and vainful blast !
I would that I so soon could see
The blessings of adversity !

A SPRING EVENING.

To C. G. C.

ACROSS the glory of the evening skies
A veil is drawn of shadowed mists, that rise
From lavishness of God's late gift, the rain.

So, after farewell said, fond memories
Of words and looks the sweetest come again
Across the glowing heart, a veil of pain.

A SOILED BLOSSOM.

BROKEN close off at the head,
Withered, and well-nigh dead,
Beautiful Primrose, how shall your dirge be said?

Finding you fair at the morn,
Leaf-bowered, under the thorn,
How had we envied you, just to be beautiful born!

Finding you faded at eve,
With what tears can we grieve,
Torn so untimely your life of beauty to leave?

Yet in your withering face
Lingers a marvellous grace,
And a flying, not dying, glory we seem to trace.

Whither does loveliness go,
When the life of it melts as the snow,
When the life of the form of it fades as the even-glow?

Have not all fair things a soul,
Or is this frail beauty the whole,
To be utterly marred, if my fingers crumple and roll?

Can I crush the beauty to death
With a finger that compasseth?
What God has made, can man destroy as a breath?

Nay ; we trust that within
Ourselves is a soul that can win
Through death to a perfect pardon and rest from sin.

And have not flowers that lie
Sinless, turned to the sky,
Something akin to the soul, that cannot die?

Sinless and passionless,
Their soul is the loveliness,
That has taken awhile for the teaching of man this dress.

For the spirit of beauty dwells
In the heart that never rebels,
That knows not the love that is earth's, nor the hate
that is hell's.

So, flower, I mourn no more
For the fingers that marred you, and tore
Your tender head from the slender stem that bore !

Not waste your beauty has been,
Though now it must fade unseen,
Till it fill new shapes of yet more marvellous sheen.

For as man's soul heavenward flies,
So the soul of this flower, that dies,
May it not blossom in heaven for the angels' eyes?

SPRING LONGINGS.

[F I might be, for but one April tide,
The blackbird, poet laureate to Queen Spring,
And have such music given my lips, to sing
Among the woodlands, o'er the meadows wide,
How in my song were my queen deified
In notes of deathless love, that should enring
My perch with peering listeners, and bring
Spring memories, when Spring's delights had died !

For now in vain I sigh for such a voice,
To utter ought of all the joys I take,
Queen Spring, from all thy wonders,—flowers, and
leaves,
And airs of heaven, and scents ; that bid rejoice
The heart, that weeps it knows not why, and wake
A love past passion on the lengthening eves.

A NEW LEGEND OF THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

WHEN Psyche lost her lord, the lord of Love,
Weeping alone she wandered,
Listless, by every well-known field and grove,
And on her lost Love pondered.

Lastly by Lethe's stream her footsteps strayed,
And "Oh!" she said in sighing,
"That I might dip, and my past life be made
Like dreams with daylight dying!"

The big tears, from her blue eyes raining down,
Fell on Earth's pitying bosom;
Sudden there sprang, amid the sedges brown,
Blue as her eyes, a blossom.

And o'er her head, soft rustling, quick and low,
As though some bird's wing fluttered,
In those loved tones, whose loss was all her woe,
"Forget me not!" was uttered.

No more; no sight, no touch; these words alone;
And "Ah!" she cried, "Forget thee?
Nay, but half Love in our glad life was known,
Half Love is to regret thee!"

“Forget thee? Nay, these flowers, my tears begot,
Shall be to me a token
Of Love, by all men called Forget-me-not,
Where'er Love's name is spoken.”

So well, sweet river-flowers, we welcome you,
Earth with faint sadness scenting,
Born of the tears from Psyche's eyes of blue,
For her lost love lamenting!



QUEEN LILY.

OH, to live on the water,
That dances away,
With breezes that ripple,
And sunbeams that play !
Oh, to lie like a lily
Among my dark leaves,
With a cup of white silver,
And a heart of gold sheaves !

When the fish did obeisance
My fair head I'd bow,
Like a Queen, or a Vestal
That keepeth her vow.
And the dragon-fly near me
Should hover aglow,
But nothing should sully
My petals of snow.

The lank water-spiders
My servants should be,
And the gauzy-winged May-flies
Should dance before me ;
And the fish to my broad leaves
For shelter should fly,
When the gleaming kingfisher
In glory went by.

For I would be stately,
As suited my sheen,
But I would be gentle,
As suiteth a Queen.
And fishes beneath me,
And insects above,
Should own me Queen Lily,
For beauty and love.

TO A WATER-LILY AT EVENING.

SLEEP, Lily on the lake,
Without one troubled dream
Thy hushed repose to break,
Until the morning beam
Shall open thy glad heart again,
To live its life apart from pain !

So still is thy repose,
So pure thy petals seem,
As Heaven would here disclose
Its peace, and we might deem
A soul in each white Lily lay,
Passionless, from the lands of day.

Yet but a flower thou art,
For angel ne'er, nor saint,
Though kept on earth apart
From every earthly taint,
A life so passionless could know
Amid a world of human woe.

THE LEGEND OF THE WATER-LILIES.

FAR out from land fair lilies lie,
That gaze into the Eastern sky,
Upon a mighty river borne,
The worship of the lands of morn.
Far out from land, like some soft isle,
The broad green leaves are laid;
And over them the lilies smile,
Or bow their beauteous heads awhile,
With sweetness overweighed.
Yet perfect though is their repose
From morns that ope to eves that close,
Something there is, more deep and high,
That wins upon the wistful eye;
Such holiness as makes men yearn
For some forgotten life's return;
Ev'n as, when heaven with stars is set,
The starred snow-flakes would fain
Rise to the life remembered yet,
And float in heaven again.
Then, flowers of wonder, let me seek,
Not a presumptuous praise to speak,—

Ye need no praise,—but if I may,
To ease the burden of desire,
By wafting lightest verse away,
Sweet with the sweetness you inspire;
As wafts the rich Seringa bloom,
To ease her passionate love, perfume.

The roughest hills take tender haze
From distance ; so my tale
Comes softened down the vista'd days,
Till passion's self is pale.
So not of sadness let it seem,
Save like the sorrows of a dream !

The sun was halfway to the West,
When to the river bank there pressed,
So long long back, a band of boys,
Intoxicate with summer joys.
Fair were they all in face and limb;
But one,—all left the prize to him,
For loveliness of boyish face,
And sinuous body's slender grace.
With happy laughter through the sedge
They burst, that hemmed the river's edge,
Parting with outstretched arms the reeds,
And feathered o'er with silken seeds.
And one would cast the brittle cane
At other, who returned again ;

Or with the plummy-pointed rush
Would seek the warded face to brush.
So with their bare limbs rosier grown
 With boyish play, they pass
Throughout the fringing river-zone
 Of tall and tangled grass,
And came upon a tiny bay,
Girt with a shell-set shingle-way.
And there were sands that wooed their feet
With warm soft kisses; for the beat
Of lisping waves had left the form
Of carved lips, where the sun lay warm,
But now no tiniest wavelet played
 On all the water wide;
Nor showed the line, by light or shade,
Where first the sand was overlaid
 With crystal of the tide.
For not the lightest wind went by
To mar that mirror of the sky.
But soon with glowing foot and palm
Was shivered all the glassy calm,
As each on each, with joyous shout,
The flashing waters flung about,
With spray that, dancing down the air,
Made mimic rainbows everywhere.
Then down the shining water-floor
 They wandered, seeking deeper waves,

Though scarcely higher than before
By foot or foot the current laves;
And nigh a furlong from the land,
Washed only to the waist they stand.
But then, as though the water lent
New life to every limb,
No longer listlessly they went,
But swiftly dive and swim;
More like some buoyant water-birth,
Than creatures wont to walk the earth.
Now silver-clad one dives below,
To seize his fellow ere he know;
Now one will stand apart a space,
A goal to which the rest shall race,
But ere they touch him, turns and flies,
Like hunted bird, from place to place,
Till to the dearest in his eyes
He yields himself an easy prize.

So gay it was, beneath the smile
Of loving skies to play awhile;
When winds above and waves beneath
Seemed of a world forgot by Death.

But deeper still would venture out
The fairest, bravest boy;
The silk-soft waters curled about
His rosy shape with joy,

And leaped to kiss his laughing face,
And clove to give him close embrace.
The water seemed itself for him
To grow more firm, since he would swim,
Itself to cleave a sliding way
Before his lithe limbs' easy play ;
Until, upon a deeper tide,
He turns, to see the waters wide,
That part him from his fellows' side.
They, in their eager play, forgot
That he was gone, or noticed not,
Till far away they heard his shout,
 And gazed the water o'er ;
There saw his form so far far out,
And marked he now has turned about
 And struggles for the shore.
For now his limbs a languor held,
And with sharp pain the nerves rebelled ;
And for his boldness, growing fear
Came o'er him, as beneath him clear
He saw how far far under lay
The sands and shells and fish at play.
So not for help,—what help, alas,
In time that tedious space could pass!
Nor was there one of stronger limb,
Nor abler than himself to swim ;—

But in desire of sympathy
In danger and distress,
Came from his lips that terror-cry,
That roused their carelessness.
Then heedless of the hopeless length,
Forgetting toils and failing strength,
Forgetting life, and death, and all,
Save their despairing comrade's call,
They flung themselves in earnest race,
To reach, before he sink, the place.
So easily does boyhood bear,
In hearts that seem so light,
Such courage as Death's self will dare,
Nor count the cost of fight.

O noble Sun ! if heart benign
As thy world-cheering smile be thine,
How dark and sad with grief must seem
The world to thine unclouded beam !
So ceaselessly the rolling earth,
With every day thou giv'st to birth,
In every clime, before thine eye
Bids pageantry of pain pass by.
How must thou mourn for woes displayed
Thine eye must see, but cannot aid !
What heart can wonder, if thou call
The soft rain-clouds, with tearful pall,

To veil from thee the sights of pain,
More sad, because to see is vain?
What human heart could bear the throne,
Whence must his eye behold alone
All misery from zone to zone?
Did not thy head untimely hide
That day in earlier eventide,
When helplessly thine eye beheld,
 From thy lone height above,
Those struggling lives ; how long hope swelled
In their young breasts, while they rebelled
Against the doom the dark waves knelled
 To happy life and love !
For scarce the strongest swimmer came
 There to his fellow's aid,
When Death put forth his stronger claim,
 That needs must be obeyed ;
And downward the light body sank
To sleep upon the sanded bank.
There, for their weary limbs, they gain
To find their labour waste and vain,
And see in deathly rest beneath
The form that seemed too fair for death.
The water, of such burial proud,
Had lent the soft limbs silver shroud,
And like a death-flame in calm air,
Streamed, shadowing his shut eyes, his hair.

Like birds that, spite of weary wing,
Long hover round and round,
With useless cries, far echoing,
High o'er the hateful ground,
Where taloned hawk, or hunter's shaft
The life-blood of their mate has quaffed;
So long and vainly hung the swarm
On tired limbs o'er their fellow's form,
Nor for spent strength could any dare
To dive where each so fain would fare;
Nor yet for love would leave the place,—
Gain land and life, but lose his face.
So one by one his strength and breath
Left powerless to the might of Death;
Till, like a flowered bier, below,
The sand lay strewn with forms of snow,
As each bestowed for burial dower
Upon their best beloved, first dead,
His own bright body, fairer flower
Than blooms in grassy graveyards shed.
What god, save Love, could launch such doom,
Could crave such cruel hecatomb?

Ah, who can tell, when even came,
Red for such guilty horror's shame,
How, one by one, by brake and fen,
Through traces of the reeds upturn,

With eager eyes burst down the men,
And women, seeking eldest-born,
And fairest-born, and dearest-born,
In vain, until the vacant morn !
Then, with the light, each saw their love
Laid cold, the cruel depths above,
Lapped calmly in the pulseless deep,
Like flowers the night-flood drowns in sleep.
Then, as his own love each beheld,
Cry upon cry the anguish swelled,
Till bore the winds so wild a wail,
As blanched the blushing morn to pale.
And there were tender feet, that tore
Through the resisting water-way,
To the sad spoil the river bore,
Now careless of its costly prey.
And there were lips, whose blood was fled
In hopeless kisses of the dead.
Some beat in passionate woe their breast,
Or rent their locks of gold,
Or fain beside their dead would rest,
As pale as them, and cold.
In vain, in vain ! What profiteth
Love's treasure in the wastes of death ?
What profiteth in death the sight
Of that, where life was chief delight ?
The face, where no emotion plays,
The eyes, that give not back our gaze,

The hands, that cannot clasp again,—
Love's old delights,—how all in vain!
And oh, last comfort! that reveals,—

As one faint spark but deepens gloom,—
How darkly Death all comfort steals,

Love's hands must deck for Death the tomb!
So by the river bank was raised
A monument, whereon was blazed
In golden letters all the tale;
And lest in time such record fail,
By cunning hands was carved the base,
Four-sided, with four scenes,—the race,
The lonely swimmer, far from aid,
The bodies on the water laid,
And last, the weepers on the shore,
And white limbs stilled for evermore.

But a more fitting monument
To those young lives the river lent.
For suddenly, above the spot,

Far in mid-waves, where fell their fate,
A cluster of bright lilies shot,

And burst in blossoms delicate.
And all who saw in wonder stood;

And soon the legend sprung,
That human was the lily-brood,

Born of the souls, that clung
In love of boyish life to earth,
Till God had given them back to birth,

New-clothed in shapes as pure as they
Had purely lived their passing day.

So sweet a grace did fancy twine

About the tearful tale,

As grows around the ruined shrine

The graceful ivy veil.

And when the fancy fits so well,

Who on its emptiness would dwell?

So, Lilies fair, forgive my verse,

Nor let the fancy seem

O'erclouded with too dark a curse,

To suit so light a theme!

For spite of that your tranquil grace,

And simple innocence of face ;

Ay, though your petals love to lie

All peace, beneath the loving sky,

And in the soft waves' stillest spot

To find a world that Death knows not ;

Still seems your peacefulness to be

Not from death's tears but terrors free ;

Nor you from death have gained release,

But after death have passed to peace.

Hence, in your sight, our hearts, that yet

Go on to death, their fears forget ;

And in your beauties deem they see,

But half unveiled, a Heaven to be.

VOICES OF THE DEAD.

A FEW snow-patches on the mountain side,
A few white foam-flakes from the ebbing tide,
A few remembered words of malice spent,
The record of some dead man's ill intent ;—

They cannot hurt us, all their sting is gone,
Their hour of cold and bitterness is done ;
Yet deepest snows, and fiercest lashing seas,
Bring not such cold and bitter thoughts as these.

A few soiled lilies, dropped by childish hands,
A few dried orange-blooms from distant lands,
A few remembered smiles of some lost friend,
Few words of love some dear dead fingers penned ;—

They are not beautiful for Love to see,
And Death's pale presence seems in them to be ;
Yet never living blooms, most fresh and gay,
Fill us with thoughts of love so sweet as they.

THE SHADOW OF LOVE.

THE branching shades, in woodland glades,
Seem to the under fern
Wide as the night that leaves no light;
No shape can they discern.

And we, who seek in senses weak
Love's form to entertain,—
So far Love's whole o'erspreads the soul,—
Too oft see only pain.

FAREWELL!

THE water lingers where the leaves
Of lilies white are lying;
The daylight there, on summer eves,
With dim regret is dying.

Only the shadows noiselessly
Now brood the white leaves over;
So, when mine eyes must turn from thee,
Each sad thought is thy lover.

ANGELS' TEARS.

THE lily weeps at even,
For vapours, fall'n anew
From the clear vault of heaven,
Turn at her touch to dew.
'Tis only so heaven's tearless eyes
With mortal woes can sympathize.

There lives one purest maiden,
Most like the lily-bell;
And when her eyes are laden
With teardrops, you can tell,
The angels' sympathy appears,
Distilled in those deep eyes to tears.

GATHERED ROSES.

ONLY a bee made prisoner,
Caught in a gathered rose!
Was he not 'ware, a flower so fair
For the first gatherer grows?

Only a heart made prisoner,
Going out free no more!
Was he not 'ware, a face so fair
Must have been gathered before?

WAITING.

WHEN rose-leaves in the long grass fall,
To hide their shattered head,
All tenderly the grasses tall
Bow down to veil the dead.

And there are hearts content to wait,
Still as the grasses lie,
Till those they love, however late,
Turn there at last to die.

FORGET-ME-NOTS.

FORGET-ME-NOTS, forgive the hand
That plucks you from the river-side,
Where in such dewy peace you stand,
To soothe our sorrows, holy-eyed!
Forget-me-nots, forgive the deed!
I crave you for a vaster need.

Forget-me-nots, 'tis long ago
We strayed together by the stream,
And chose you for a sign, to shew
Our dream-sweet love was not a dream.
'Tis long ago, but I have not
Her look of trusting love forgot.

Forget-me-nots, forgive my need,
That claims you from the silent sedge,
To open wounds, too numb to bleed,
By thinking on her broken pledge!
Nay, rather let me gaze on you,
And dream awhile she still is true!

BRIMHAM ROCKS.

OUR feet are winged with happiness,
And hardly the gay heather press,
To shake the light bloom from the ling,
Or toss the bee to his wandering.
Our feet are swifter than the bee,
For we are on the moorland free.
A million petals everywhere
Fling up their fragrance on the air;
And miles away the rolling heath
Blushes with blossom still,
Here darker in the dips beneath,
Here rosier on the hill.
There, sheer against the shining sky,
The broken rock stands stern and high,
Seeming an iron crown, above
A land that blooms with blushing love.
Then fainter swells or sinks the red,
Till, on the farthest verge,
It meets the grey sky overhead,
And beyond sight they merge.

Our feet are winged, our thoughts are free,
As seabirds on their home, the sea;

And fly from nook to knoll about,
Now search each tiniest flower-bell out,
Now hover o'er, bewildered,
The mighty moorland, rolling red.
For ever, as our rapt eyes gaze,
Thought shakes its shackles off
Of habits, wrought by days and days
Of lifeless will, and loveless ways,
Though hard they be to doff;
And in such moments of delight,
The soul stands freed by each fair sight,
And as with new-found wings can go,
Unchained, ecstatic, to and fro.
And loosed in the soul's freedom, slips
The flood of laughter from our lips;
And eyes are bright with dancing smiles,
Or grave with deep glad thoughts by whiles.

So, all unordered, on we stray,
Like noontide clouds in disarray;
Though, like the swift magnetic tide,
Will some mysterious influence guide,
Unseen, one to the other's side.
For we are set this day to storm
The rocks that rise before,
In all their fastnesses to swarm,
And all their clefts explore.

Some careful climb, some careless leap,
From rock to rock, and steep to steep;
Foot follows foot, and hand helps hand,
Till on the jutting crag we stand

That o'er the moorland towers;—
What care we to possess the land,
If but its view be ours?

If we, without a care, may gaze
On purpled hill and dreamy haze,
More than crowned conquerors we seem,
Our conquest less than theirs a dream.

But we must go, for the sun goes,
The clouds catch up the heather's rose.
The light is fled, the laughter past;
What of a day so sweet can last?

A gleam of rose, a dream of love,
Fading like sunset clouds away?

Or anything beyond, above,
That we in years long hence may say,
Nor need description more, *That* day?

UNDER THE LIMES.

HOW sweet in winter time we feign the Spring,
How fair by night we dream the day shall be!
Can any April-tide such freshness bring,

Our eyes on any morn such brightness see?
Half heedlessly we hear the first bird sing,

Behold the first shoots breaking on the tree;
And when we wake, our reason fain would cling
Prisoner to fancies, fearing to be free.

For like the crossing leaves, that day by day

Grow larger, till they weave the linden shade,

Our pleasures so are woven to a whole;

Not in the part we see how glad are they,

But after find ev'n fairer than we prayed

Their dreams and memories left within the soul.

CLEMATIS.

THERE is no sadness deeper
Than memories of Love,
Like petals, when the creeper
Lies fallen, left above.

The wind, when from their holding
It tore the tendrils down,
In some frail cobweb's folding
Caught not the purple crown.

And when some tempest sweeping
Has laid Love's glory low,
And torn it lies, and weeping,
Amid the mires of woe ;

Oftimes in things the slightest,
In idlest mood or thought,
In looks or laughter lightest,
The wrecks of love are caught.

AUTUMN TEACHING.

COME with me where the listless shadows linger
 Beneath the chestnut tree,
That Autumn touches with his fiery finger
 Yellow and brown to see!

Come with me there, and walk among the shadows,
 Upon the rustling leaves,
And watch the calm shades lengthening o'er the
 That sunset interweaves! [meadows,

For it may be, that in the glad year's dying,
 Thou, to whom life seems Spring,
An endless Spring, whose leaves shall ne'er be lying,
 Whose birds ne'er cease to sing,

May'st gather to thy soul the shadowy sorrow
 Of winter days to be;
And find that morrow, following merry morrow,
 Must bring some change to thee.

Then may'st thou turn, and finding all things moving,
 Amid a world of change,
Read the unchanging nature of my loving,
 And seek no wider range.

D E C A Y.

O LUSTRE of decay !
The daylight glides away
In glow of richer glory than at noon ;
Autumn, that steals the flower,
Gives the tree golden dower,
And crimsons walls that will be leafless soon.

O dimness of decay !
The sunset hastes away,
And leaves the world to lone and darkling night ;
And Autumn, when he flies,
Leaves only howling skies,
And trees that toss their naked boughs in fright.

THE SWALLOWS' FAREWELL.

WITH songs and flowers we follow the Spring,
Queen Spring, as she flies to her distant lands;
Over land, over sea, our restless wing
Tarries not, save where her footstep stands.

The sunbeams flash on our flitting breasts,
To lighten our beautiful Mistress' way;
And when for a moment her fleet foot rests,
Over her head we hover and play.

Men cannot see our beautiful Queen,
But they think Spring follows wherever we fly;
And they cry to us,—Stay, that the woods may be green!
And—Rest, that the Winter may come not a-nigh!

But the beautiful Spring is flying, and we
Must fly with her, fly with her, over the land,
And follow her, follow her, over the sea,
For her guard, in a vast invincible band.

For see! the Autumn with fiery hand
Is touching our haunts in the tall green trees;
And ruthlessly soon his flaming torch
Shall bid our bright homes flare in the breeze.

And soon the armies of Winter shall march,
The legioned frosts, o'er the land below;
Whose feet the rivers and fountains parch,
Whose hands hurl arrows of hail and snow.

Poor men! your beautiful Spring should die,
Stricken and slain by the Winter, if we
Did not shield her flying, and with her fly
Where never a Winter's breath may be.

But fear not, far though she fly from you,
Long though the tyrant Winter reign!
For his forces vainly her feet pursue,
And safe she shall come to you yet again.

Far in the lands, where you weep her gone,
She shall gather armies and mighty bands,
She shall borrow the arrowy shafts of the sun,
To drive the Winter out of your lands.

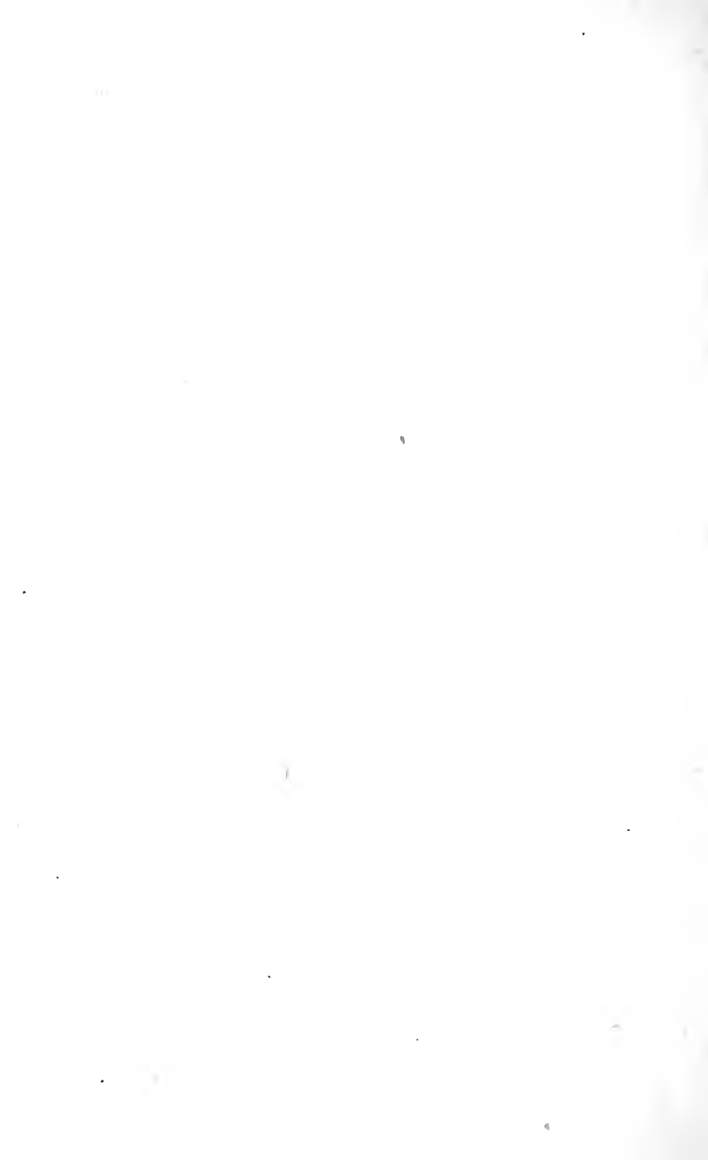
The west wind and south shall her chariots be,
When, with force invincible, on the track
Of the pallid Winter she march, and we
And Summer and joy in her train come back.

ONLY TO LIVE

ONLY to live,—'tis passing sweet,
When Spring's fresh flowers are at our feet,
And round the birds in rapture sing;
Our hearts too leap to hail the Spring,
And with unwonted pulses beat.

But now, amid the driving sleet,
With loves like dead leaves at our feet,—
Ah, me! it is too hard a thing,
Only to live!

We wander in the crowded street;
The only face we fain would meet
No opportunity can bring.
Ah, me! it is too hard a thing,
When death has robbed us, or deceit,
Only to live!



GERTRUDE'S LOVE,
A Legend
OF
THE "OLD BUILDINGS,"
WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

DEDICATION.

To C. A. L. G.

NOT of his treasures gives the sea,
Not gold and jewels, to the land;
Nor of all precious things, that he
Has ravished with his robber hand.
With worthless weeds he wreaths her o'er,
With shells unvalued lines the shore.

Ev'n so his reverent love he shews,
By giving not his costless pelf,
But that which of his being grows;
True gift it is to give of self.
For my poor gift let this atone;
I give thee what is most mine own.

IN music, when the player plays
Some strange new air sublime,
There seem to us a myriad ways
To order tune and time.

Not till each note and chord we hear
Fixed from the player's brain,
To us his melody is clear,
In perfect changeless strain.

So seems it, to the life we live,
The great world's history,
One form God's moving fingers give,
One ordered melody.

But there are myriad other ways
And orders might have been;
'Mid these imagination strays,
And paints as real the scene.

So here from what the world might be,
My fancied tale I've made,
One bar from some world-melody
God's fingers have not played.

WHEREFROM.

JUST at the end of Beaumont Street,
In front of Worcester walls,
Strange shrieks of woe the passer greet,
As every footstep falls.

Yet in the bright and busy day,
How few that pass thereby
Have paused to hear the sound, or say,
Whence comes so wild a cry?

But when the midnight air is murk,
And lonely all the ways,
And shadows from the lamplight lurk
In gloomy nooks and bays,

So loud and fearful comes the sound,
It strikes the soul with dread,
As living men lay underground,
And shrieked at every tread.

Then list the tale, and should ye find,
When there your footsteps fare,
Ye think on it, I pray be kind,
And tread more softly there !



I.

WHERE Thames's waves are broad and bright,
Lie meadows deep and green,
And long-leaved willows grudge the light
Their chequered boughs between.

The waters lip the whitened roots,
Beneath the hanging bank ;
And the tall willow-herb upshoots
Amid the rushes rank.

Just by a bending river bay,
Beneath a willow's shade,
In shadow-dappled garb of gray
Two on the bank have stayed.

Their long dark garb, and close-drawn hood,
Should tell the monk ; and each
Bears hung around his neck the rood,
His Saviour's death to teach.

Yet little like to monks they speak,
In solemn accents slow;
The eye is bright, and hot the cheek,
The whisper quick and low.

Scarcely the lovely scene they scan,
Below, around, above;
For one is woman, and one is man,
And all their talk's of love.

Nay, ask not how they met; how first
Love sprung, and grew, and spoke;
How Gertrude priestly barriers burst,
How Bernard's vows were broke.

We know not how the swallow guides
O'er trackless gulfs her way,
The purple moth unerring glides
To her lord, leagues away.

We know not how the springing seed
Leaps into leaf and flower,
But Love springs quicker than the weed
By April shine and shower.

And Love has thousand subtler signs
Than swallow far from land ;
And lightning-swift are Love's designs,
All hosts at his command.

So ask not how,—is't wrong or right !
What, is the day not June ?
And is the land not drunk with light
This dreamy afternoon ?

See, through the loop-holed leaves the sun
Darts many a sunbeam sword ;
The rays fall rounded every one,
Through angled inlets poured.

So to these lovers life's a dream
Of light and shade to-day ;
And rounded all the angles seem,
And soft the shadows play.

Their ground is not the common ground,
Their sky, the common sky ;
Nay, every chancest sight and sound
Is changed to ear and eye.

Their words are like the running waves,
Whereof the pulse is past,
Long spent in ocean's echoing caves,
Or broken on the vast.

And could their words that were so sweet
Exactly written be,
'Twere as a river bright and fleet
Changed to a lifeless sea.

Too short wast thou, long summer day,
Too hasty, lingering sun !
Of all that heart to heart would say
The tithe was but begun.

But see, the sun stands o'er the hills !
Too long they have delayed ;
The dew upon the grass distils,
Each short bent casts its shade.

Yet ah ! some token still they seek,
Some pledge of frailest flowers,
That shall, when hours are loveless, speak
Of these enraptured hours.

And slowly as they rise and pass,
Beside their path's a spot,
Where grows beneath the bank of grass
The blue Forget-me-not.

They pause to pluck the fairest blooms,
And each to other gives
The bright flowers, breathing faint perfumes,
Where all love's memory lives.

A moment silently they stand,
Turned to the western sky;
The sun has left the verge of land,
The gold clouds blush and die;

Then with close clasp and burning kiss,
(Divine it ye who may!
No words can tell so great a bliss;)
Their fond farewell they say.

Then slow, as fits the monk's estate,
They leave the secret spot,
Silent, save at the entrance-gate
One word, "Forget-me-not!"

II.

THERE'S darkness in the dungeon keep
Of cruel castled lord;
But darker is the dungeon deep,
The sinning monk's award.

Few of the brothers know the spot,
Where, in a dark cell's floor,
With oozes thick, and rust and rot,
There lies a strong trap-door.

Beneath is hid a noisome den,
With damps and death-dews wet,
A grave where none but living men
Are laid, the Oubliette.

A hole it seems earth's heart amid,
Hewn from the slime and clay;
These damps, these dews here shrank and hid,
When shrank the Flood away.

Since o'er the dread dark chaos first
God spake, and there was light,
No ray of light has ever pierced
This black eternal night.

To-day the earth is bright and clear,
The heav'n is blue o'erhead,
The birds sing sweetly to the ear,
And death and night seem dead.

To-day, when red was sunset's gleam,
A man has left the light,
There to be laid, where death shall seem
A sun to end the night.

Two silent monks, with faces masked,
Have led him from the air;
He passed one door, and piteous asked
To pause one moment there.

For there the light, though faint and dim,
Still breaks through windows barred;
How bright, how dear those rays to him,
Before his night unstarred!

Another door has swung and closed,
And now those fearful three,
Whose forms but now the sunset rosed,
Scarce each can other see.

Another door, another still,
Another, and they stand
O'er that dark trap-door, to fulfil
The changeless dread command.

No light they bear, no lamp may be,
Nor ray of candle there;
And not a mole's eye here could see,
Nor bat the darkness bear.

But they have touched the sounding door,
Sunk in the sodden ground;
And one has grasped the key he bore,
And one the lock has found.

They try, they pull, they tug amain;
At last the hinges groan;
Two-handed now they strive and strain,
Till back the door is thrown.

All fearfully the brothers fare,
Beside that ghastly grave,
To thrust their helpless prisoner there,
Whence not a hand can save.

Yet must he not by headlong fall
Into the dark depths, die ;
Nor dash to death against the wall,
To end his misery.

So hand and foot are tightly bound,
And with a steady hand,
Slow inch by inch beneath the ground
They lower him where they stand.

His feet have found the floor beneath,
Fettered he falls and lies,
Alone with darkness left, till death
Shall end his agonies.

Ah, hushed his tongue and closed his lips
Till that last moment were ;
But this last blackness, hope's eclipse,
Body nor soul can bear.

“O men, have mercy! God above,
Is there no pity, none?”
With shuddering haste the brothers move,
Until their work be done.

The fatal door has fall'n again,
The clanging echoes sleep;
And now with noiseless steps the twain
Back to the daylight creep.

O happy day! O glorious light!
O balmy airs around!
With footsteps quick and faces bright
The stern-faced priest they found.

“’Tis done? ’Tis well. He lies below?
A fearful fate it is!
But Holy Church has ordered so,
And fearful sin was his.

“But let them toll the bell, nor fail
For his poor soul to pray,
If prayers, with penance, may prevail
Such guilt to turn away!”

III.

THE sun is sunk; the vesper bell
Is pealing sweet and clear;
The grey monks steal from cell and cell,
The summons as they hear.

One lingers at the chapel door,
In the last twilight dim;
'Tis yet a little while before
Begins the vesper hymn.

Westward this monk is gazing far,
Where, o'er the last red ray,
Like a bright cross, the evening star
Shines o'er the tomb of day.

The hood is close about his head,
Beneath its shade are eyes
Brimming with tears too glad to shed,—
Stars stol'n from dewy skies.

The hood is close, yet one large lock
Of lustrous hair has strayed,
Like brown weed on the under rock,
By dreamy motions swayed.

The cloak he holds about his face
With such a delicate hand,
With which might match for slender grace
What lady's in the land?

And when, one moment, to set back
The hair the soft hands shift,
And falls the hood unholden slack,
There, in the sudden rift,

The blushing cheeks, the lips of fire,
The heaving breast of snow,
Too little suit the sad attire
The sober monk to shew.

'Tis well the brothers all have passed,
And their slow prayers begin;—
But hastily the hood's made fast,
This monk too hurries in.

Ah, olden tale ! Ah, golden tale
Of golden love and truth !
Of hearts whose heaving rends the veil
That hides their golden youth !

Gertrude has left her loving home,
Her pleasure, hope, and pride ;
Put off her womanhood, and come
To be her love beside.

Beside ? Nay, only near, no more ;
Perchance one daily sight,
One hurried word through grate or door,
These feed their love's delight.

But once,—ah, that sweet afternoon !
'Twas but two days ago :
The cherished flowers have faded soon,
The love-words live and glow.

Not since has she beheld the face,
Nor heard the voice so dear ;
Yet still she feels his long embrace,
His whisper in her ear.

Well might this monk behind the rest
Linger in dreams of love,
Might find love's colours in the West,
And love's own star above !

This eve she knows 'tis Bernard's turn
To read the Holy Word ;
Ev'n the strange language she'll discern,
In *his* loved accents heard.

She enters now with downcast eyes ;
She dares not raise her head,
As voice to voice in psalms replies,
The solemn prayers are said.

She strives to pray, she strives to praise ;
But for her hot heart's beat
She scarce can hear the hymns they raise,
And scarce her part repeat.

The droning voices sink and die ;
The hum, the stir has ceased ;
Still fails for bashfulness her eye
To look towards the priest.

Her head is bowed, the hood conceals

Her hot and glowing cheek ;

Nor sees she ought, but only feels,

That one is risen to speak.

Ah!—"Pray for Bernard's soul (though now

He lingers, living yet),

Condemned to die, for broken vow,

Below, in the Oubliette!

IV.

THE buds that blow to greet the Spring,
Should wintry winds instead,
And keen frosts come with cruel sting,
On the cold ground lie dead.

The bird that to her nestlings dear
With joy expectant flies,
And finds her nest torn, empty, drear,
Heart-broken droops and dies.

And Gertrude thus had drooped and died,
There, when the woe she heard,
When doom to all her hope was cried,
Save for the stern priest's word,

“He lingers living yet!”—What hope
In that, what comforting?
Yet wildly to the weakest rope
The sinking soul will cling.

Her mind could frame no way, no plan;
Thought came not for that breath;
Yet that one word, ere thought began,
Had saved her heart from death.

Ah! when the soul is spent with woe
And habitude of tears,
Long days of happiness must flow,
Ere it forget its fears.

But if to the glad soul there come
One blast of agony,
As dead at once we feel, and numb,
As years had since gone by.

The prayers, she knew not how, were o'er;
The monks go, pair by pair;
She stands, as she had stood before,
In the calm outer air.

There stood she but one hour ago?
(That hour once seemed so brief!)

Nay, she has lived a life of woe
Since, and grown old in grief.

But of herself she thinks not long;
Swift to her secret cell
She flies, 'mid wildering thoughts that throng,
While peals the damning knell.

She pictures all his hours of pain,
His anguish there alone;
Until her bitter tear-drops rain
Upon the pitiless stone.

“Ah, love! despairing now he lies,
Doubting all things above!
Nay, he may doubt the earth and skies,
He cannot doubt my love!

“Yet ah! what human tongue can take
Through the thick earth one cry,
To comfort him for her sweet sake,
Who fain for him would die?

“Cold Earth, if thou hadst heart to feel,
And sympathise with woe,
Now wouldst thou yawn, and paths reveal
To where he lies below!

“Or thou wouldst make thy substance thin,
As is the yielding air,
Till to his ears my words should win,
And he should answer there !

“O feeble hands, and fingers fine,
Unused to toils of men,
I would instead such claws were mine
As dig the wild beast's den !

“Yet inch by inch a way I'll make,
His life and mine to save ;
Death, should he ere 'tis done o'ertake,
Shall find me in my grave !”

One half the cell was paved with stone,
Whereon her pallet lay ;
She kneels the unpaved floor upon,
Of firm and beaten clay.

Her raining tears scarce soften it ;
Wherewith shall she begin ?
The solid clay yields not a whit,
Though bleeds her tender skin.

Must she despair? must Bernard die?

Is nothing left to do?

Nay, swift as fire shot from the sky,

Hope lights her heart anew.

'Twas but three days ago they made,

Beneath the chapel floor,

An old monk's grave, and still the spade

Lay at the chapel door.

'Twas noon of night; the lonely stars

Alone her steps could tell;

Softly she drew the sounding bars,

And crept from out her cell.

A few swift steps,—she reached the spot;

See, she has grasped the prize;

Then back, and half her fears forgot,

The unused toil she tries.

O woman's love and constancy!

The silent night goes on;

How many days shall dawn and die,

Until her work be done?

Short time she takes for food or sleep,
Nor leaves her guarded cell,
Save for one hour, her place to keep,
When sounds the chapel bell.

No monk, that longest vigil passed,
Watched half so late as she ;
Nor in his strictest Lenten fast
One half so faint could be.

Yet all too swift she deems the time,
So lagging to the rest,
And morning chime on even chime
With steps too hurrying pressed.

Still night and day she toils, nor knows
Though faint be hand and head ;
And now she prays his pains may close,
Now fears to find him dead.

Once only, feigning careless eyes,
She dares demand the spot
Of an old monk, whereunder lies
The prison whence comes man not.

Ah ! well the spot she marked, and planned
Direction, angle, round,
Thither to work with certain hand
Her slow path underground.

O woman's love and constancy !
The hours cease not to run ;
Oh, will the loved or lover die
Before the work be done?

V.

THE sky above is over all,
And God's above the sky;
But faith in heaven and God is small
In the night of misery.

Upon the damp ground Bernard lay;
The echoes of the door,
That clanged his death-doom, died away;
Henceforth he hears no more.

Never upon his ears again
One sound of earth shall fall,
Save his own voice, that oft in vain
On men and God shall call.

O terror of the darkness there,
Like solid walls around!
O terror of the deathly air,
Stirred by no pulse of sound!

He knows above the pealing bell
Calls to the holy place,
That Gertrude leaves ev'n now her cell
In hope to see his face.

“O tender heart, wilt thou not break,
To hear my sentence dread?
Must life be blasted for my sake
To such a gentle head?

“Why cam'st thou from thy happy home
For such a wretch as me?
Ah, now thy love is laid in tomb,
What hand shall care for thee?

“I would our love to thee had been
A dream, forgotten now;
To me alone life's acted scene;—
For all my life art thou!

“Ay, I would die contented so,
Bear all the bitter pain,
If nought of this thy mind might know,
My memory all retain.

“Nay, I would bear pains thousandfold
More long, more fierce than this;
Sooner meet deaths a thousand told,
Than not have known that bliss.”

O wondrous power of love! He lies,
Forgetting pain and death,
Forgetting all the happy skies,
And the cold clay beneath.

Alas, that such delight could stay,
And in such dreams ideal
His soul float peacefully away
To worlds where dreams were real!

But these are but the fading glow,
That, when the sun is past,
Lights for a while the peaks of snow,
Ere all be overcast.

Too soon they fleet, and as new woke
To his dread loneliness,
He trembles in the muffling cloak
Of night and nothingness.

And as foul things troop forth by night,
From his soul's depths arise
A thousand thoughts that shun the light,
New-winged in fiendish guise.

Till all the black air filled about
With forms and eyes of dread ;
And demons led their horrid rout,
And gibbered at his head.

And sometimes, as in nightmare course,
His thought again reviews
His punishment, and from the source
To the end his fate pursues.

He sees once more the judges stern,
The accuser hears once more ;
Words cried in sleep to witness turn,
A lovelock on the floor.

And worst, the letter she had writ,
How fondly, madly prized !
Few words, few lines there were in it ;
But he was idolized,

And all the letter breathed of love ;
 " Love you have vowed to leave ;
Your sin is judged in heaven above ;
 Man dare not give reprieve !"

Then the stern sentence, and the rest :—
 Thank God, but half was known !
His guilt alone, not hers, was guessed ;
 The doom is but his own !

So through the dragging endless night,
 Thought only marks the time,
Now raptured in fond love's delight,
 Now burdened with the crime.

But fainter, fainter grows his frame,
 And fiercer hunger's pain ;
And oft he calls on Gertrude's name,
 And Death's, as sisters twain.

One day—ah, many days had gone !—
 He had a heavenly dream
Of Gertrude ! all his doom was done,
 Heaven opens, gleam on gleam.

Borne in her arms he floated high
Up to the realms of bliss ;
Brighter and brighter grew the sky ;—
He woke, and knew her kiss.



VI.

AY, Gertrude's work was o'er, and o'er
Were all her doubts and fears;
She sees his living face once more,
His living murmur hears.

Now what are all her perils past;
Her fears to miss the place
In the earth's thickness, or at last
To find a dead man's face?

Scarce had she trusted, when her hand
Into the hollow went;
Then hours it seemed ere she could stand
Within the narrow rent.

A faint lamp in her hand she bore,
In the great darkness dim,
That shewed the foul and slimy floor,
His ghastly grave, and him.

He lives, but hardly lives ; in vain
 Were food or light or air ;
But what is death ? He sees again
 His own loved darling there.

Her arm beneath his head is laid,
 Her kiss is on his lips ;
One whispered prayer for her he prayed,
 Then soul from body slips.

Yet scarce she knows ; her eyes too fail ;
 Love held her to the close ;
But fainting limbs and lips death-pale
 Have told how quick life goes.

Not long behind him will she wait ;
 Close at his side she lies ;
And ere his spirit reached heaven's gate,
 Her spirit after flies.

WHERE TO.

PEACE be to them! They lie in peace;
But from the under ground
The long-taught echoes never cease
Their sad and shrieking sound.

Those cries at last to heavenward broke,
Uttered so oft in vain,
Till ev'n the slumbering echoes woke,
And learnt the sounds of pain.

They moved not then one pitying heart;
If one of yours they move,
And bid your tears of pity start,
Not vain the tale will prove.

L I G H T.

THE night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one ;
Yet the light of the bright world dies,
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one ;
Yet the light of a whole life dies,
When love is done.

LOVE THE WEAVER.

I WATCHED Love weaving dreams: across the loom
Stretched firm, immovable, the warp I saw,
The dull realities of Fate's stern law,
Dark threads, unchanging, bound to unseen doom.
But Love stood by, and with swift hand shot through
The warp bright Fancy's shuttle, with a thread
Of golden unreality that shed
O'er all the web its radiant rainbow hue.

So that no more are seen the rigid lines
Of dark unchanging destiny, but all
The perfect web with undimmed lustre shines.
But morn came, and Love fled, and I saw fall
From the fair tissue, every golden gleam,
And woke to weep that life was not that dream.

IN STORM.

AS strong, as deep, as wide as is the sea,—
Though by the wind made restless as the wind,
By billows fretted, and by rocks confined,—
So strong, so deep, so wide my love for thee.
And as the sea :—though oft huge waves arise,
So oft, that calms can never quite assuage,
So huge, that ocean's whole self seems to rage ;—
Yet tranquil, deep, beneath the tempest lies ;
So my great love for thee lies tranquil, deep,
For ever ; though above it passions fierce,
Ambition, hatred, jealousy,—like waves
That seem from earth's core to the sky to leap,
But ocean's depth can never really pierce,—
Hide its great calm, while all the surface raves.

A M O M E N T.

WHEN the lightning flashes by night,
The raindrops seem
A million jewels of light
In the moment's gleam.

And often in gathering fears,
A moment of love
To jewels will turn the tears
That it cannot remove.

R E G I O N S O F L O V E.

WHO knows the deeps, where the water sleeps
Leagues from the light away?
Who knows the heights, where myriad lights
Fill heaven with endless day?

The earth goes on, seeks and loses the sun,
And men in the changes delight;
Love whirls us away into changeless day,
Or whelms us in changeless night.

THE FICKLE SEA.

THE fickle sea, the faithless sea,
That men go lightly sailing over,
Though leagues on leagues of waves has she,
For every wave she has a lover.

She loves the ships, the smooth bright ships,
She clasps them close in her embrace,
She kisses them with treacherous lips,
And seems sweet suitor for a space.

But the good wind, the honest wind,
That hates her, and her fair false smile,
Lets not the brave ships lag behind,
Lulled by her soft ensnaring wile.

Kind, in stern seeming, he reproves
The loiterers with angry blasts,
And drives them from their dreamy loves,
With moaning sails and bowing masts.

The smiling sea, the treacherous sea
He lashes, till she foams for wrath;
No fair love now, but fury she,
With deep dark jaws, and lips of froth.

And on the flying ships she turns,
With armed hatred in her waves,
And batters sides and stems and sterns,
And gapes in thousand yawning graves.

Yet if they gain at last the port,
She smooths her false face to a smile,
And swears her fury was in sport,
Until once more they trust her guile.

The fickle sea, the faithless sea,
That men go lightly sailing over,
Since man was man thus uses she
To soothe and slay her every lover.

THE CHESTNUT TREE.

BARE and brown was the chestnut tree,
When he went, my lover, away from me ;
But under the branches brown and bare,
He promised again to meet me there.

Bud and blossom, sweet chestnut tree !

And bring my lover again to me !

The bloom was white on the chestnut tree,
When he came, my lover, again to me ;
But he came in wrath, for a rival's guile
Swore to another I gave my smile.

Turn flowers to fruit, fair chestnut tree !

And turn my lover again to me !

The ripe husks fell from the chestnut tree,
When he came again, but not for me ;
For my false, false rival was at his side,
And the bells rang loud for the new-wed bride.

Shower down thy dead leaves, chestnut tree !

And bury my broken heart and me !

SO LONG AGO!

CHILD of the dark eyes, do you know
What it is makes me kiss you so?
'Tis that your eyes are dark and deep,
And love in their low depths seems to sleep,
As in those of my love, when he kissed me so,
Long ago, ah, long ago!

Child of the dark hair, can you guess
Why from your head I cut a tress?
Because his lock, of the same dark hue,
I burnt in scorn when he proved untrue.
But now I could look on it calmly, so,
It was so long, so long ago!

O M E N S.

I HEARD a whisper in the 'wind,—
But who would trust the breeze?—
Which said, "He leaves old loves behind,
Your heart alone to please!"

And when the enchantress nightingale
Sang out the same aloud,
I said, "It is an idle tale!
His heart, alas! is proud!"

But when the soft moon stayed above,
And through the tender mist
He came himself to tell his love,
What could I do but list?

I heard a wailing on the wind,
Which said, "You are forgot!"
I smiled, for in my hair entwined
Was his forget-me-not.

And when the mocking bird of night
Moaned out the same to me,
I cried, "If birds our hearts could fright,
But little faith had we!"

But since the morning broke with rain,
And brought his false farewell,
I wander like a dead man, fain
To doubt his own death-knell.

"ANNIE."

WHERE art thou, Annie, once my love,
So long now lost to sight?
In vain I vex the stars above,
And question of the night;
For they behold thee, where thou art,
Yet cannot speak to ease my heart.

Dost thou too thither turn thine eyes,—
Those eyes I thought more fair;—
And seek, as I, to read the skies,
That witness everywhere
The looks that lovers lift in vain?
They see, but cannot soothe our pain.

Dost thou too think of me, and sigh
For memories of the days,
When thou wast coy to me, and I
Beset thee in the ways,
And tasked thine eyes and blushing cheek
To tell me what thou wouldst not speak?

Does thy hand too the print retain,
That feels as fresh to-day
On mine, as when our fingers fain
Had never loosed away?
My lips have softer been since then,
For thy lips' sake, in words with men.

Where art thou now? I know no more
What thy life is to mine ;
I only know I loved before:
But what am I to thine?
Alas ! I would, but cannot pray
My memory be passed away!

C Æ L I.

I F stars were really watching eyes
Of angel armies in the skies,
I should forget all watchers there,
And only for your glances care.

And if your eyes were really stars,
With leagues, that none can mete, for bars
To keep me from their longed-for day,
I could not feel more far away.

CLEOPATRA'S MIRROR.

YOU have a thousand slaves, who do
Unwillingly their duty ;

And I one service have for you,—

To image back your beauty.

But that one service is so sweet,

I would in it my life might fleet !

Your other slaves say you are stern ;

I always see you smiling,

As from me some new grace you learn,

Your lovers for beguiling.

Those slaves, did they but win, as I,

Your smiles, would dare thrice o'er to die.

Oh, would you that all lands should pass

Beneath your firm subjection,

Then deem the world your looking-glass,

And made for your reflection !

Did you but smile on men as me,

The whole world should in bondage be.

"ALICE, MY WIFE."

IF Alice were a river-flower,
Then I should wish the stream to be,
For I'd beguile the sweetest smile
She smiled at her own self in me.

If Alice were a nightingale,
Then I indeed should wish to be
An echo clear in woods a-near;—
To hear herself she'd sing to me.

But now that Alice is my wife,
What is there I can wish to be?
Why, anyone beneath the sun,
Or far above the sun, but me!

"ELLA; A RÉVERIE, BY RENÉ FAVARGER."

MUSICIAN, when you dreamed away
An hour upon that composition,
Which I have tried in vain to play
As something more than inanition,
I wonder who the maid could be,
Who roused so dull a *Réverie*!

The only Ella that I know
Is just the opposite of dreamy;
She laughs at sentimental woe,
Her eyes are always bright and beamy.
How strangely different must be
The Ella of your *Réverie*!

My Ella in emotions deep
Runs the whole gamut in a minute,
One moment seems inclined to weep,
The next is singing like a linnet.
Your Ella spends half life on E,
E flat too, in your *Réverie*!

If anything could e'er inspire
A man like me to turn composer,
'Twould be my Ella's life and fire,
Which kindle every one who knows her.
Your Ella seems a blight to be
To a musician's *Réverie!*

I should not like to mock at you,
If you had lost your Ella lately,
For few can write a dirge,—how few!—
That is not dull, yet goes sedately.
But had you felt from Ella free,
Livelier had been your *Réverie!*

Yet, friend musician, if the name
You're fond of, and would wish to tell a
More cheerful story of the same,
I'll introduce you to my Ella.
But you a mighty man must be
Of *her* to write fit *Réverie!*

VALENTINE VERSES.

I SEND a sign of love ; the shower sends
The breeze before it, whispering, "He is coming!"
And the glad field her leaves and flowers bends,
And hushes all her myriad insects' humming.

I send a sign of love ; the morning sends
A rosy cloud, his mounted messenger ;
And the glad earth in ecstasy attends,
Sure now her love himself will come to her.

O fairer than the field, than the whole earth,
Would that thy lover's coming in thy sight
Were as the rain-cloud to a land of dearth,
Were as the morning to a world of night !

THE HOME OF MY HEART.

NOT here, in the populous town,
In the playhouse or mart,
Not here, in the ways gray and brown,
But afar, on the green swelling down,
Is the home of my heart.

Where the hill-side slopes down to a dell,
Whence a streamlet has start,
There are woods and sweet grass on the swell,
And the south winds and west know it well;
There's the home of my heart.

There's a cottage o'ershadowed by leaves,
Growing fairer than art,
Where, under the low sloping eaves,
No false hand the swallow bereaves;
'Tis the home of my heart.

And there on the slant of the lea,
Where the trees stand apart,
Over grassland and woodland, may be,
You will catch the faint gleam of the sea,
From the home of my heart.

And there in the rapturous Spring,
When the morning rays dart
O'er the plain, and the morning birds sing,
You may see the most beautiful thing
In the home of my heart.

For there at the casement above,
Where the rose bushes part,
Will blush the fair face of my love.
Ah, yes! it is this that will prove
'Tis the home of my heart.

S E A - W E E D.

A LAS, poor weed! The careless tide
Has left thee with his lightest foam;
And now a desert, drear and wide,
Divides thee from thy wished-for home.
His flow may bear thee back once more,
But canst thou live thy life of yore?

Alas! I too am left awhile
By her I love, in lightest play;
On distant loves I see her smile,
I hear her laughter far away.
Her heart may turn to me again;
But can my heart forget the pain?

HOPES AND FEARS.

THY face is as the face of ocean,
Upon a moonlit summer night,
That changes with a ceaseless motion
In restless waves of shade and light.

And I am as the merchant, standing
Upon the shore with anxious eyes,
To watch the waves that may be stranding
On unknown rocks his argosies.

For all my hope and all my treasure
Is on this changing ocean fair,
That brings or wealth without a measure,
Or shipwreck, and a life's despair.

THE TROUBLED SEA.

THE weary ever-wandering waves,
That know no change from their unrest,
Make murmuring in hollow caves,
And sighing on the soft sand's breast,
That they for ever, to and fro,
Beneath the pitiless sky must go.

The toiling tempest-driven ships,
That buffet with the angry foam,
Escape at last its hungry lips,
And hail their white-cliffed harbour-home ;
But the wild waves no rest may know,
But toss for ever to and fro.

WHAT DO WE?

WHY are we idling here,
In the land of the free,
Set far from a foreign fear
By the circling sea?

Have we not eyes that read,
Through blinding tears?
Have we not hearts that bleed,
And burning ears?

When our lips are loud in wrath,
Why fails our hand?
For the billows, that rage in froth,
Beat rocks to sand;

But our wrath, more impotent,
Though louder of lip,
With the froth of the mouth content,
Lets moments slip.

While the ruffian holds his head
Most proudly high,
Whose hands from the slaughter are red
With the deepest dye.

And blood of woman and child
On the reeking plain,
And innocence, force-defiled,
Cry out in vain.

What, was our vengeance slow,
When from farther shore,
No wilder wailing of woe
Our heart-strings tore?

As a hurricane then our sword
Over India swept,
For 'twas English blood outpoured,
And our kin we wept.

Ah! is it only in peace
We are brothers all?
Does the kinship of nations cease,
When the weaker call?

Was it only for England's fame,
And England's might,
When slaughter we held no shame,
And vengeance right?

Or was life more sacred then,
Virtue more fair?
Were they more than women and men,
That had perished there?

Out on the taunt! The shame
We feel as deep,
Though not for the English name
Nor kin we weep.

They were such mothers, they
Such babes as ours;
Ours be the vengeance day,
And the sword that devours!

This poem was written in September, 1876, at a time when the perpetrators of the Bulgarian atrocities seemed more likely to receive promotion than punishment, unless measures stronger than mere remonstrance were resorted to by some outside Power.

THE HILL PASS.

IT is time to arouse us from slumber,
For the peaks are forsaken of night,
And the stars of their 'wildering number
Leave only one light.

No fear now to find not a footing
In the shadow on slippery crag,
Or to stumble at torrent's uprooting
Of pine tree or jag.

See, each watch-fire far of the foemen
Is a smoke, that all night was a spark;
Let us hail it triumphant, the omen!—
Their hopes dashed and dark!

Quick to horse, ere the daylight be stronger,
Lest our steel, blue as true blood, should seem
To turn traitor with loitering longer,
And betray us by gleam!

Now by rock and by chasm we thunder,
On, on, to the pass in the hills,
Where the sheer rocks are parted asunder,
And the white torrent spills.

For there, 'twixt the black walls uprising,
A host may be barred by a score;
And there, save for traitor's surprising,
Will our bands be before.

On, on, with a thunderous clanging,
Through the echoing gorges we go,
Heights a thousand feet over us hanging,
Depths a thousand below.

And here, where the rock wall runs curving,
Our horses, so headlong the pace,
Half over the chasm hang swerving;—
Who recks in a race?

What heart fears for death now, or danger,
With his Fatherland's freedom for prize?
What is death to the yoke of the stranger,
On a free neck that lies?

But darker the cliffs now are closing
Above to a cavernous glen,
Dark as death, hidden deep from day's rosing,
A horror of men.

Above us, on black wings are wheeling,
New startled, the raven and kite;
On our heads, from the damp crevice stealing,
Fall dews of the night.

Beneath, from the valleys mist-clouded,
A skeleton fir, here and there,
Rises dark as death's finger, enshrouded
In folds of despair.

But in us is no heart of a maiden,
To flutter at omens of ill;
With a purpose too stern are we laden;
Let tremble who will!

The dewes from our heads we shake, scorning;
And the horror of death from our souls,
Like the mists at the rising of morning,
Impalpable rolls.

For there see a cleft in the ridges,
That rise like a wall in our way,
Which a cloud, red with sunrising, bridges,
The portal of day.

There, there is the pass; there the foemen
Not yet bar the way; and behold,
There right in the cleft, for good omen,
The great sun, all gold!

TO MEET AGAIN.

FRIEND, we shall see no more the days
That made our friendship, nor again
Together wend such happy ways,
Together pass so lightly pain.

We were two vessels, that all day
Sailed side by side the summer sea;
But when the night comes, wide away
They wander parted;—such are we.

Now is the new dawn broke; our eyes
Still strain across the vacant blue;
We yearn for daily sympathies,
And one known face where all is new.

In vain! Yet let us not despair!
Behind is loss, before is gain;
The ship is firm, the sky is fair,
For each is marked a pathway plain.

And oh! the joy, when in long time
Our glad eyes hail each other's prow,
To give the proof, our labour's prime,
Of love that goes light-handed now!

SEEDS OF FIRE.

WILDLY the clouds o'er the heaven face were drifting,
Hoarse roared the waves, and shrill the shingle hissed,
When, on a sudden, the clouds of shadow, shifting,
Shewed the pale moon in a bower of silver mist.

Even then you passed me, a face as fair and fairer,
Bowered in the wild gold of your wind-tossed hair,
Rapt, as of old some virgin votive-bearer,
Moving in measure for her moon-goddess there.

What was't I saw, beyond your outward seeming,
What secret read, that turned my thought to fire,
Shrivelling to ashes the weeds entwov'n and teeming,
That thrall'd my soul so long with frivolous desire?

Out, as new-born, with a mighty joyance leaping,
Yearned all my soul to strain to nobler things ; [ing,
The world seemed a wonder, though it were a world of weep-
And my heart a mighty eagle, rejoicing in its wings.

Even then you passed me, your face was hid for ever,
Even as the moon hid again her face above ;
Yet in my heart sprang desire of new endeavour, [Love.
And a root of noblest purpose from so chance a seed of

Yea, I will do, for there is reward for doing ;

Yea, I will hope, for there is a prize to gain ;

Yea, should hereafter bring recompense nor rueing,

Right, to prove it right, needs Paradise nor pain.

Fair face, you know not the guerdon of your giving,

Even though the selfish life be shewn the life of shame,

Tho' the light of your soul, in your eyes, like jewels, living,

By one swift glance have flashed a withered heart to
flame.

Now no more I see you, no more is chance of meeting,

Waters, wide as ocean's, roll between us here ;

And hark, below, the hoarse waves have ceased not from
their beating,

And the clouds without a glimmer, rush by in wild career.

A S T A T U E.

I DREAMED I was a statue, nobly wrought,
Set on a pedestal with staring eyes,
Silent, unmoved, and lovely. Yet unchanged
Still glowed my human heart with love and wrath
And vexing passions. Many gazed on me,
And praised my fashioning; and I was proud
Of such praiseworthiness. Until a day
Fell, when there came the fairest face of earth
To gaze upon me. I was glad at first,
So long she looked on me, and wonderingly.
Till with a taper finger stretching out
She touched my marble. "Only stone!" she said;
"Only a stone!" Her bright words,—as the sun
Unwreaths the glozing mists, that with a world
Of dreamlike glamour veiled the world of life,—
Rent from me love of my own loveliness
And all old praises; and I cursed the bonds,
That kept me from my human heritage
Of fellowship with her, and power to win
Love to meet love.

Alas ! I could not stir ;
Though my fierce passion should have rent the stone,
So worked it in me ; and she passed me by,
And quietly to him on whom she leant,
“And yet,” she said, “’tis wrought most wondrously;
And see the Greek ideal, the perfect calm !”



ICH GROLLE NICHT.

I WILL not grieve, though hopes, that grew as fair
As the first leaves that face the April air,
Nipped by untimely frost must droop and fade,
Like leaves that fall not, though o'er-long decayed.
So many panting souls have yearned in vain,
I will not grieve that I must join the train.

I will not grieve, though many labours, wrought
With lingering love, and high enraptured thought,
Now, like marred castings from a broken mould,
Mock all the sculptor's dreams, grown hard and cold.
So many hands have found their labours vain,
I will not grieve to join so large a train.

I will not grieve, though rays of purest love,
Centred at last from many a light above,
Have found no dark-hued softness to be fused,
But such white radiance as their force refused.
So many hearts have loved before in vain,
I will not grieve that I must join the train.

A RACE WITH LOVE.

I RACED the ripple of the sea ;
Full easy seemed the race to me !
For on the wind's swift wings I go,
While toil the laggard waves below.
But when I gained the farther shore,
I found the waves were there before.

I raced the wind across the sea ;
Full easy seemed the race to me !
For through the hurricane I flew
Upon the lightning, leaping blue.
I gained the goal, but ah, despair !
The wind had long been blowing there.

I raced with Love o'er land and sea ;
Full easy seemed the race to me !
For with the speed of thought I sped,
Love lingered weeping o'er his dead.
But when I gained the farthest shore,
Love had been welcomed long before.

LOVE'S REWARD.

FOR Love I laboured all the day,
Through morning chill and mid-day heat,
For surely, with the evening gray,
I thought, Love's guerdon shall be sweet.

At eventide, with weary limb,
I brought my labours to the spot,
Where Love had bid me come to him;
Thither I came, but found him not.

For he with idle folk had gone,
To dance the hours of night away;
And I that toiled was left alone,
Too weary now to dance or play.

THE GUERDON OF LOST LABOURS.

NO magic, that the moon can lend
To broken arch or ruined wall,
Can that mysterious peace transcend,
That hushes me at evenfall.

For then, her hand in mine, I sit,
And all life's shapeless phantoms move,
All broken hopes, waste labours fit
In one bright ordered dream of love.

O silver crown to all my toil!
Although the crown I sought was gold,
Still let no doubts the lustre spoil
Of the dream-pageant I behold!

Sufficient let me count success,
Not to the sought-for to succeed;
To win one heart, whose lovingness
In loss or gain is equal meed!

A N U N ' S D R E A M .

I DREAMED I was a toad,
An ugly, loathly toad,
That crept, and fed, and won me hate and fear,—
For at that time men held us much in fear
For venom's sake, though in our heads there glowed
Such jewels as they held most dear;—
So many score of years ago,
As I could neither count nor know.

I lived,—a loathly life, I dreamed;
I died,—a dismal death, it seemed;
I crawled to the dim crevice of a stone,
And sank to sleep alone.

If I were dead, how should I dream?
Yet little lifelike did it seem,—

A drift of hazy images and sounds
Across a half-shut memory;

I had no hearing, yet remember sounds,
And sights, although I could not see.

Yet in my death, or sleep, I knew
My crevice tomb had year by year closed to,
Shutting me tighter, tighter in ;

Till, had I been alive, I could not move,
Never again to the glad daylight win,
Nor scent the air above.

Then,—was it ages passed,
Or only years, or months?—I could not tell.
I never woke, imprisoned fast
In such an iron cell.

A fitting death it seemed,—
For even as I dreamed,
I reasoned with myself upon my dream,—
A fitting death for such a life,
Shut slowly out from any gleam ;
A torpid, sullen life,
A dull and ugly death,
Hopeless, slow quitting, if it quitted, breath.

Morn, it is morn ; I am waking again,
As I used to waken at morn,
To the sound of singing, and scent of rain,
And the shining of beams new-born.

Morn, it is morn ; but there used to be light,
When the morning arose of old ;
Morn, is it morn ? But it seems like night,
Or is day grown dark and cold ?

Morn, it is morn ; it is cold and dark,
But it must be morning still,
For I hear already the singing lark,
As the morn comes over the hill.

The lark is singing aloud, so loud,
In the heaven over my head ;
But above me there lies a giant cloud,
That crushes the daylight dead.

I know 'tis a cloud that presses me down,
And keeps the daylight away,
For I hear the thunder, that tries to drown
The lark that sings to the day.

Louder and louder the thunder roars ;
I can hardly hear the lark ;
But the nightingale peals, and the thrush deplores
That the day is grown so dark.

And all the birds of the forest and field
Their voice with the thunder unite,
And the cloud above me has rocked and reeled,
But it will not yield to the light.

Silence now, for the thunder has ceased,
And the lark,—has it dropped from the sky?
There is no singing or murmur the least,
But the cloud it has passed not by.

Somehow I was still a toad,
But somehow with man's mind I knew
What I was, and where, and that the load
Above me was the stone, that had shut to;
And men had come and hewn it out,
And cut and carved it square about,
And laid it for the ponderous base
Of an exquisite feathered pillar, that is the grace
Of the convent chapel; where it helps to bear—
So I too help, for am I not part of the stone,
Myself half marble grown,
Buried deep, unknown?—
The organ, set to praise God there.

So this was all my dream,
And when I awoke, I knew
That it was not all a dream,
For still the organ thrilled me through.
I had dropped to sleep in the chapel there,
Worn with vigil and fast and prayer;

All was dark; but the organ-inaster
Was playing a wild and passionate air,
That made my languid pulse beat faster,
And made me long to be fair.

Till the music dropped, with one long cry,
To a soft melodious lullaby;
And out of this and my dream, there grew
A sense that even I,—
Ugly, unloved, from all the world cast by,—
Had even here some work to do,
That I could help to praise God too!

A STARRY NIGHT.

WHAT eyes are now with mine in wonder fixed
On that bright host, whose count but One can keep?
Eyes, that would span the space that lies betwixt,
Child-eyes, content to deem them guards of sleep;

Dull eyes, that see no wonder in a star,
Too much with care and toil of earth oppressed;
Bright eyes, that lovers vow are lovelier far
Than eve's fair planet in the fading West.

So night by night, for years in countless score,
Have all man's ages turned their gaze above;
How then can men not love each other more,
While all those lustres speak sublimest love?

Alas! to eyes, that gaze from distant spheres,
How different far must seem our planet's state,
Wrapped round with clouds of never-ceasing tears,
Or burning with the sullen hues of hate!

ONE FLIGHT.

I WISHED for the wings of a bird, to fly
Into the blue heights of the sky.

Sudden I sprang from the scented grass;
I saw tall trees like flower-stalks pass.

The clouds above me greater grew,
That had scarcely before obscured the blue.

Then lost I seemed in a great gray mist,
No sight to look to, no sound to list.

Up and up, till the wide, bare sky
Burst, like an ocean, on my eye.

I stayed my flying, and hung apoise;
No echo reached me of earthly noise.

I hung o'er the head of the cloud below,
Soft as a hill-top heaped with snow.

I gazed on the blue heights over me,
And felt for a moment I was free.

I was free to fly where I would in space;
My thought was free from the world's worn face.

A moment the thought of freedom won
Thrilled me; I turned to greet the sun.

Ah! like a great red ball he lay
Hard at the henceward gates of day.

Ev'n as I gazed the glory fled,
The white clouds flushed for a moment red.

Then night fell, and fear came over me;
I thought no more of the joy to be free.

But I thought of the night, of the dark and the chill,
The long slow hours, the voiceless still.

Above was the desert sky unknown,
Below cloud-seas; here was I alone.

Lonely I felt, as when children wake
In the night, and cry for the terror's sake.

And I cared no more for the wings to be free,
So that the dear earth I might see.

Downward, downward; now closed the cloud,
Glimmering and chill as a dead man's shroud.

An hour or a moment?—Lo, the earth lay bare,
In the white moon's rising radiance fair.

A world of shadows, with nothing clear;
A world of darkness, but oh! how dear!

Downward, downward; the moon on the vane
Gleams bright; lo, a light in a window pane.

I touched the ground, its scent I knew;
I kissed each grass-bent, damp with dew.

My wings were gone, I was free no more;
But gone were the vain wishes felt before.

And I knelt, while my thanks went up to God,
For the love that binds man to the sod.

THE SAINT AND THE LARK.

THE SAINT SPEAKS.

WERE I the lark, my restless wing
Should never tire nor stay,
Until it touched the outer ring,
That walls the world of day.

For though my voice no more divine
Should sound by angel song,
Nor lent me any claim to shine
Amid the glorious throng ;

Some angel, in the land of love,
For love should pity me,
And draw me in, like Noah's dove,
From wastes of misery.

THE LARK SPEAKS.

Were I as man, I would not gaze
On heaven that lies above,
For days of heaven are only days
That know no change in love.

But I would seek on earth below
A space for heaven to win ;
To cheer one heart o'ercast with woe,
To save one soul from sin.

For though the lark could soar to light,
That never clouds should stain,
What peace were his, whose selfish flight
Had left a world in pain?

E D E N.

IS there a spot on earth, where never yet
Has sorrow wrung the soul?

Is there one place no tears have ever wet,
From farthest pole to pole?

There, though inhuman rocks be all around,
Or frozen lie the land,
Though lions lurk there, or the leopard bound,
Death's hound, on every hand;

There, though my feet wax weary in the quest,
My body worn with toil,
There let me wander, there to find a rest
Beneath the quiet soil.

In vain, in vain the search ; there is no land
Left upon earth so sweet ;
Or else an angel still, with flaming brand,
Guards it from mortal feet.

"ETHEREAL."

THERE lies, above our grosser air,
A region of blue heaven fair,
Too thin a feather's weight to bear.

And there to souls, like white snow driven,
From earth's rough waves a rest is given,—
A harbour, locked by lands of heaven.

Ah, to reach to it! only one
Of men I know beneath the sun,
Who to this home of rest has won.

All shapes of beauty he can see,
All hues of bright divinity.
Trust him! He cannot lie to thee.

For though betwixt our earth and him
Such clouds and mists deceptive swim,
That to his eyes life's ways look dim;

Yet, when on high he lifts his gaze,
He sees the stars' untroubled ways,
And the Divine of endless days.

To us this star or that seems bright,
And oft some headlong meteor's flight
Holds for a while our raptured sight.

But he discerns each noble star;
The least is only the most far,
Whose worlds, may be, the mightiest are.

He marks not meteors that go by,
Fired for one moment as they fly:
He heeds not, knowing they must die.

How should he care what men may say,
Who see no heaven day by day,
And dream not of his hidden way?

He cares not though they call him mad;
Yet who would see his fellows glad,
From sympathy with woe is sad.

And he is sad, not for himself,
But for the inhuman lust of pelf,
All knees bowed to one Baal,—Self.

'Tis vain to preach, and no men know
The sweetness 'twere with him to go,
Leaving our beaten tracks below.

So like a lonely vine he stands,
That stretches sympathetic hands,
To cling with all its thousand bands ;

Yet though, because no prop be nigh,
Its yearning tendrils droop and die,
It stands, for it is stayed on high.

RIVER DEEPS.

THIS soul you think your fathom-line can sound ;
A few coarse weeds, much common mud, you say,
A shell or two, that may hold pearls, you found ;
The banks above it is that are so gay !

Poor eyes, that think to pierce the poet's soul !

Come with me here by night !—How deep, how far
Now seem those depths, where heaven's own height is
Can any line reach even that nearest star ? [whole !

A H E R O.

NOT crown on head, or bloody sword in hand,
Not conqueror of dragons or of kings,
But simply clad, I saw a hero stand,

Whose sole experience was of simple things.
For many years the corn on yon high land
Sprang from his straight deep furrows, and there rings
Now on no threshing-floor a beat so grand
As when his flail struck out the grain that clings.

Yet had he foes to fight, and griefs to bear,
And fought and bore them bravely; yea, and won,
By word and high example, many a soul
Like foes and sorrows as himself to dare,
In one chief service. Now his work is done,
And God has written him in His hero-roll.

PORT MEADOW, OXFORD.

O WIDE wan waste of waters, where no breath
Ruffles the mirror surface, but the gray
Of clouds above is real as if the day
Were no less gloomy to a world beneath!
O dreary waste, the mind remembereth
Full many an hour of summer life and play,
Where now beneath is lifeless slime and clay,
And the vast level lies like ashen death.

Yet as at eve on the wild scene I pondered,
While thoughts of horror held my pulses hushed,
Sudden, amid the clouds beneath that rushed,
Shone out a star. Ah! would mine eyes have wandered,
Were there no waters, to that star above?
Were there no death, should we know all of love?

U N A.

WHEN, as the chill dew on the trembling rose,
Death's icy fingers on your lips are laid,
And all the beauty, that so richly glows

In dimpling cheek and laughing eye, must fade;
What shall we keep of all that is decayed?
What voiceful vision from your deep repose

Can tell us to what regions you have strayed,
And where your foot in wingèd lightness goes?

For now there is no flower that gladdens you,
Nor song, nor deed of love more sweet than these,
But we are called to share the feast of joy.

So all for others does your heart pursue
Earth's gladness; and in heaven, could you not please
Some other with your raptures, they would cloy.

THE HIGHER LOVE.

PRIESTESS of Love, that ledest me
To worship at his shrine
No more thy loveliness nor thee,
Though thou be half divine!
No more to thee my feasting eyes
Shall do their single sacrifice.

For now a deeper, holier awe
Has turned my soul again,
Who worshipped thee when first I saw,
To think such worship vain.
And now I only hold divine
The God who made thee, and is thine.

ONE DEED OF GOOD.

IF I might do one deed of good,
One little deed, before I die,
Or think one noble thought, that should
Hereafter not forgotten lie,
I would not murmur, though I must
Be lost in Death's unnumbered dust.

The filmy wing, that wafts the seed
Upon the careless wind to earth,
Of its short life has only need
To find the germ fit place for birth;
For one swift moment of delight
It whirls, then withers out of sight.

TWO ROBBERS.

WHEN Death from some fair face
Is stealing life away,
All weep, save she, the grace
That earth shall lose to-day.

When Time from some fair face
Steals beauty, year by year,
For her slow-fading grace
Who sheds, save she, a tear?

And Death not often dares
So wake the world's distress ;
While Time, the cunning, mars
Surely all loveliness.

Yet though by breath and breath
Fades all our fairest prime,
Men shrink from cruel Death,
But honour crafty Time.

THE UNKNOWN DEITY.

THERE stood an altar in a lonely wood,
And over was a veiled deity,
And no man dared to raise the veiling hood,
Nor any knew what god they then should see.

Yet many passed to gaze upon the thing,
And all who passed did sacrifice and prayer,
Lest the Unknown not rightly honouring,
Some great god they should anger unaware.

And each one thought this hidden god was he
Whom he desired in his most secret heart,
And prayed for that he longed for most to be,
Gifts that was no fixed godhead to impart.

Nor prayed in vain, for prayers, scarce breathed in word,
Were straight fulfilled, and every earthly bliss
Showered down on men; till half the world had heard,
And left all ancient gods to worship this.

But Jove, in anger at his rites unpaid,
Tore off the veil with one fierce tempest-breath:—
Lo! that to which all men their vows had made,
Shuddering, they saw, was their fell foeman, Death.

And all forgot the blessings they had had,
And all forsook the kindly carven stone.
'Tis now a shapeless block ; the zephyrs sad,—
None else,—their nightly prayers around it moan.



IN FRIBOURG CATHEDRAL.

THE light is dim in the dusky aisle ;
The giant pillars, that hold the pile,
Darken up to the roof unseen.
Below, in the shadowy space between,
Are faces that out of darkness start,
As in paintings of some dead master's art,
A face looms out of shadow.

Hark !

What angel presence moves in the dark ?
What power, that seems to stir the night,
As when God spake and the world was in light ?
There is no light, but music clear,
That passes the sense of the outward ear
To the inmost soul, till night and day,
And time and place, and the things men say,
And the things men do, and our own intent,—
All thought's worn garments,—are scattered and rent ;
While the melody, like a new will, blends
All life's instincts to nobler ends.
Our thought newborn upleaps and springs,
As the butterfly from the husk takes wings,

As the soul from its prison spreads and plays,
Wild with new powers, in Love's full blaze.
It is glory to God that we hear, but now
No more we wonder with why and how
God's creatures should praise God;—our heart
Seems with the praises to be part,
Rapt from its selfish thoughts afar,
Dwindled down from a world to a star,
A little light, that has yet its place,
And its glow in the glory of heaven's face.

Till a sudden silence fell, and the night
Darker seemed; as after the light,
And the rapturous pulse of the air, that stirred
With songs from the founding of earth unheard,
Silence and darkness closed on them,
The Shepherds on plains of Bethlehem.
Till a new soft melody moved the air,
Like the dawn's first radiance, faint and rare.
And shaped of the music, a dream of rest
Opened, as a morning flower, in my breast.
Outside was the roaring of restless wheels,
Warring in vain with the voice, that steals
Down from the dimly-lighted loft,
Like a far bugle, clear and soft.
And the spot of calm in the city's din
Seemed like a soul at peace within,

When the voice of God, Who dwelleth there,
Passes the noise of feet that fare,
And the merchant cries and the battle shout
Of the world, that wars with itself without.

But the soft air sunk ; and there rose anew
A noise of thunder and storm that grew.
Louder it waxed, till the wild chords drowned
All dreams of peace in tumult of sound.
And sudden it seemed myself played there,
Till my playing had lashed to storm the air ;
And the lightning leaped, and the harsh rain poured,
And the earthquake rolled, and the thunder roared,
Till the pillared fane was rocked amain,
And the heaving earth had burst in twain,
And tower and turret and roof-tree all
Parted in sunder with thunderous fall,
While, cradled in tempest, the wreck among,
The organ-loft on its pillars swung,
Where my passionate hands tempestuously
Still dared the revolt of earth and sky.

Silence again :—the music was o'er :
I was back in the world, where we walk, once more.
But I thought of the humble men of old,
Of the unknown hands, of the toils untold,
Of the patient hearts that had fought despair,
Till their thought stood shrined in the organ there.

Little of honour or fame they earned
In the world, that passed them by, or spurned ;
Now, as the prophet's bones, life fled,
They bid our dead souls leap from the dead.



"TWO THAT SLEEP, AND ONE THAT
WATCHETH."

(Suggested by the Picture by S. Solomon.)

"COULD ye not watch one hour?"—The hour is late,
And the chill air is drowsy, and they sleep;
Two, but one sleeps not; he, whose love was great,
And who was greatly loved, his watch will keep.
The stars are clear, but not to them his eyes
Turn to win patience from their patient light;
Still on the ground he keeps his stedfast sight,
And bid to watch, so watches for surprise.

And so to his unsleeping sense was given
To see his Master's agony, that drew
That sweat of blood; to hear that cry of woe.—
'Tis thus with those three priceless gifts of heaven;
Hope sleeps, and Faith may slumber, but the few,
Who really love, nor sleep nor slumber know.

E A S T E R E V E.

EARTH, what a precious burden dost thou bear
This day and night within thy rugged breast !
With steadier course about the sun should fare
Thy footsteps, lest they break this sacred rest !

All, all is ended ; now the form so marred
Lies, like a wind-worn blossom, closed again,
Till morn restore its beauty, only scarred,
Lest our glad hearts forget too soon the pain.

Yea, lest our hearts forget or disbelieve,
The prints are left in hands and feet and side ;
So even the sins, those sufferings pardon, leave
Upon our hearts such traces as abide.

Ah, day, delay not, as in Ajalon,
To garner richer harvest in Death's store ;
But speed more swiftly to that joyful sun,
That sees Death spoiled, and terrible no more !

BECKENHAM.

September 22nd, 1876.

A STILL September day ; the silent air
Was rich with scent of fruits and falling leaves ;
The fields, new-lightened of their heavy gold,
Gave offering of their praise in odorous dews,
While woods and lanes divined the thanksgiving,
And hushed their voices ; save that here and there
A leaf dropped earthward, like a loving tear,
Or in the hedge one robin singing seemed
Only to deepen silence.

So we stood
To take farewell of that last legacy,
Which man who lives and moves can leave to sense,
Her body, left of all that made it her,
Save the calm sweetness on the marble brow.
We stood, and as the sense bade all farewell,
Faith took new hold on her inheritance
Of comfort, that the spirit had but changed
Earth's outworn garment for a robe of light,
Her land of exile for her home.

Her life,
Looked back upon, seemed like the summer past,
The days of storm forgotten, and the whole
Rounded to bright completeness ; till the shock,
Which smote the crown of life's short lustre, came,
And left her lone. Yet the years after wore
Such quiet as this still September day ;
With all her children's love, a hallowed light,
Shed round her head ; who not impatiently
Desired the end, but being content to live,
By mere contentment made for others' joy.
Now she has met again that half of life,
Which, being so lost, made all her life look on
Even to this hour of meeting, not as death,
But life again made whole ; her body here
Now rests with his, and now her spirit stands
With his, in the dear presence of her Lord.

We turn, and though our upward gaze can reach
No deeper than the cloudless blue, nor see
The gates of heaven one moment, as they part
To take her in ; yet as the prophet stood,
With all his Master's spirit fall'n on him,
So we, with her own childlike faith, go forth,
Nor fear to say, for this brief while, Farewell !

MAY 23rd, 1876.

'TIS over; and we leave thee to the gloom,
With Death sole watcher by thy silent bed,
Save for the breath of many an odorous bloom,
That fade for thee, fair flower among the dead!

Frail little blossom of a windy May!

We will not weep, though now the world be fair,
That thou untimely thus art torn away;

The death we weep doth thee from weeping spare.

Now thou wilt wail not, though the night be deep,
Nor wake in terror, though the night be long;
Ere here the hands have laid thine eyes to sleep,
In heaven thy lips have learned the angels' song.

So we will leave thee, trusting all to love,

His love, Who gave thee but to take again,
Till we shall find thee in His folds above,
And when we find, shall all His ways be plain.

THE FAREWELL OF THE OLD YEAR.

WHEN the moments of friendship are numbered,
How oft it appears,
That the love, which in laughter has slumbered,
Awakes now in tears!

We are friends, that have journeyed together
Long time, you and I,
Through sunshine and stormiest weather;
But the Old Year must die.

And awhile in your hearts will awaken
A bitter regret;
And the paths, that your feet have forsaken,
You cannot forget.

Yet I pray you to mourn not my going,
Though we have been friends!
What am I but one billow, whose flowing
Has touched shore, and ends?

And the tale of my joy and my sorrow
Lives but as the trace
Of the waves, which the tides of the morrow
In turn shall efface.

Yet I leave you, as waves leave their treasures
Of coral and shell,
A gift, passing sorrows and pleasures,
Our friendship to tell.

I leave you the friendships, whose growing
Has been from my birth;
There is nought that the tide brings in flowing
Can equal their worth.

For as shells from the murmurs of ocean
Steal echoes that last,
So in friendship is stored the emotion
Of years that are past.

1876.

A VISION.

PALE, blood-stained, who are these, that are thronging
the throne of God?

Their faces are ashen with anguish, their garments soiled
from the sod ;

Wide and wan as a sunless ocean, the multitude stands,
With silent lips, and with piteous eyes, and with praying
hands.

There is none that speaks, and none that stirs, in the
numberless hosts,

Like the still white clouds in twilight heavens,—an army
of ghosts ;

Slain in the battle some, with the curses of war in their
mouth ;

Some in wantonness slaughtered ; some stricken of hunger
or drouth.

Who will stand for them, who will plead for them, there
at the throne?

Are they not all God's children, whom Christ has claimed
for His own?

Sinners?—but all are sinners! Ah, who can tell their doom?
If there be room in hell, yet in heaven is there not room?

Like the motes of dust from a sunbeam, when a sudden
wind has blown,

Like the stars from the presence of God, when a universe
is o'erthrown,

They are gone from our gaze, they are gathered and
garnered for bliss or pain,

Woman and warrior, Turk and Christian, slayer and slain.

Is there no sign then, is there no wonder, is there no cry?
Are the dead as a wind that passes, are they gone as the
waves go by?

Listen ! is there no sound of a sobbing that shakes the air,
And the wail of an unseen multitude, waked from a mute
despair?

Do we dream, or are dead men weeping, as they wept in
the world below,

For the red fields sown with the dead, and no harvest to
reap but woe,

And the guiltless herds that are marched, like the beasts,
to a sacrifice,

That can save not them nor their rulers from the hell of
falsehood and vice?

And they weep that they see no end, and they cry that
the end should be !

Ah, God ! send down thine angel, that the rest die not
as we !

As thou didst send thy Son, to die that sin might cease,
Send down one lowest of angels, only to breathe of peace.

To breathe thy peace in the counsels, where the rulers,
unconcerned,
Stake for a phantom glory, the honour that peace has
earned ;
And the happy homes of a nation they stake for a states-
man's pride ;—
Oh, send thy peace ! oh, save them, for whose sakes the
Saviour died !

January, 1878.

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